



A STUDY OF E-COMMERCE CONSUMER BEHAVIOR IN PHARMACY SECTOR

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Abstract: One of India's largest and fastest-growing industries is the healthcare sector. In India, the internet has evolved into a widely used platform for making purchases of goods and services. Online drugstore purchases are not an exception. The benefits of buying pharmaceuticals outside the conventional supply chain are outweighed by a number of patient safety issues. The industry does, however, confront difficulties like a lack of consumer trust, a lack of consumer rights protection, and a lack of financial transaction security. Both rural and urban people's awareness of e-commerce platforms was crucial during the pandemic time. In comparison to other industrialized economies and the largest developing economies, the Indian online pharmacy sector is still in its infancy. The pharmaceutical market ranks 13th in terms of value and third in terms of volume.

Keywords - E-pharmacy, online medications, Pandemic

I. INTRODUCTION

India's healthcare industry has grown significantly in both employment and income. The expansion of services and coverage as well as increased governmental and private spending are all factors in the rapidly expanding Indian healthcare sector. India's public healthcare spending increased from 1.8% of GDP in 2020-21 to 2.1% of GDP in 2021-2022, according to the Economic Survey of 2022. Healthcare has become one of India's largest sectors, both in terms of revenue and employment. Healthcare comprises hospitals, medical devices, clinical trials, outsourcing, telemedicine, health insurance and medical equipment. India is the second most developed developing nation in terms of mobile health uptake. The growth of e-commerce platforms has introduced the concept of E-pharmacies in India. The e-pharmacy industry aids in expanding client reach, better inventory control, improved purchasing margins, competitive and lowered drug prices, and the availability of generic medications. The E-pharmacy market was estimated to be valued at INR 25 billion in 2021. The industry will surely innovate as a result of the continuous expansion of pharmaceutical e-commerce in an effort to offer the most convenient means of ordering prescription medications online. The pandemic scenario has been a major factor in the expansion of online pharmacies. E-Pharmacy was deemed a vital service during lockdown by 19 state governments. During COVID-19 shutdown, the number of households using e-pharmacies increased by 2.5 times. Covid-19 has encouraged numerous customers to purchase their medications online in 2020. According to a survey, chronic patients order between 60 and 70 percent of the medications obtained through e-pharmacy platforms since it is more convenient and economical for them. Every social media user needs to be aware of e-platforms in the current environment. The researcher must explore consumer awareness of and preference for online pharmacies in order to raise awareness. e-commerce is the process of buying and selling tangible products and services online. Multiple parties are involved along with exchanging data or currency to process a transaction. It's part of a larger industry known as electronic business (e-business) that encompasses all the processes necessary to run a business online. E-commerce can help businesses, especially those with a narrow reach such as small and medium-sized businesses, access broader markets and increase their presence by providing cheaper and more efficient distribution channels for their products and services.

1.1 E-Pharmacy

The E-pharmacy market was estimated to be valued at INR 25 billion in 2021. Between 2022 and 2027, it is projected to increase at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 22%, when it is estimated to reach INR 90 billion. E-commerce businesses have noticed a 20–30% increase in orders because of online client activity. In 2008, there were 2986 online pharmacies functioning globally. In India, 65 online pharmacies opened their doors in 2005, therefore we need to rethink the way we now practice pharmacy, especially since the Internet provides so much value by making healthcare services more easily accessible, even in the most rural areas of the nation.

1.1.1 Top company of e-Pharmacy healthcare application In India:

PharmEasy- PharmEasy is an online retailer of pharmaceuticals, diagnostics, and telehealth services based in India. You can choose from more than one million products at PharmaEasy, an app that provides high-quality healthcare. It promises delivery in 24-48 hours in more than 1.2k Indian cities. The business widened its reach and now asserts that it can supply medications to 98% of Indian pin codes. PharmEasy has bought Medlife, Aknamed, and Thyrocare Technologies, among other companies.

TATA 1Mg - Tata 1mg is India's leading digital healthcare platform. Tata 1mg is the one location that seeks to meet all of your health needs within the convenience of your home, from obtaining medications online to contacting doctors online. Almost 1800 cities in India have access to this app. More than 260 million people have used this app.

Practo- Practo provides a web-based platform that is advantageous to both patients and physicians. Patients can look through doctor profiles online and make confirmed appointments using Practo search. Shashank ND and Abhinav Lal established the company in May 2008.

Netmeds- One of India's most popular pharmacies, Netmeds.com provides over 7 million satisfied clients throughout India with high-quality medications at fair pricing. More than 3 million people utilize it and believe in it. This is an extremely reliable platform that has been helping people for a long time. The consumer pharmacy market in India is projected to be worth US\$18 billion by 2020 and US\$55 billion by 2030.

Apollo Pharmacy- Apollo Pharmacy is accredited with an international quality accreditation and provides more than 5000 goods online across many categories. There are more than 3500 offline pharmacies nationwide operated by Apollo Pharmacy. The advantage of ordering medicines from Apollo is that the customers can order it 24/7 and get the medicines delivered on time and at their doorstep.

1.2 Impact of COVID-19

The pandemic has caused a massive change in India's healthcare system. The COVID-19 epidemic accelerated India's healthcare system's digital transition. Due to the nationwide lockdown and movement limitations, digital healthcare solutions have replaced traditional healthcare delivery methods. People's preferences have shifted towards online consultations due to worries that in-person consultations may increase people's risk of getting the virus. The need for digital healthcare solutions has significantly expanded as a result of the government's support for telemedicine. The COVID-19 pandemic has forced Indians to embrace digital change and reevaluate present healthcare norms. In-person consultations are no longer preferred over digital platforms by nearly 60% of patients and 65% of doctors. The rapid penetration of smartphones and the Internet, coupled with supportive government policies, has propelled the growth of the market.

1.3 Challenges of E-Pharmacy:

Lack of faith: Customers still worry about acquiring fake medications because the Indian e-pharmacy business is still in its infancy. To prove the legitimacy of the medications, the majority of participants offer FAQs and run media campaigns.

Security and privacy of sent information: Consumer worries about prescriptions and health records are anticipated to increase as the e-pharmacy market grows. Market participants will need to take strict measures to protect client data privacy. Due to their ignorance of the internet, persons who lack literacy can use technology-driven models.

Need for strong Legal and regulatory framework: Since there is no specific legal framework that applies only to these players, the legal framework that governs the offline sale of pharmacies also applies to online pharmacies. To safeguard consumer interests and act as a support system for the sector's expansion, the government must quickly create a unique legal framework for e-pharmacies. A tangible set of regulations is required for India to regulate e-pharmacies. Uncertain interstate drug/medicine transfer laws.

Benefits of E-Pharmacy

E-pharmacies are gradually gaining a sizable portion of the Indian pharmaceutical retail value chain. The following elements are helping to make this possible:

Time savings is one of the most significant benefits of the E-Pharmacy application. You can get your prescription drugs online in just a few minutes, and you'll get them in just few days. To place an order, all you need to do is enter your prescription into the mobile app, website. There is no need for you to visit the drugstore or stand in line at the pharmacy.

Online drug shopping also helps you save money. Online pharmacy purchases can reduce your overall cost by up to a third, according to studies.

Convenience for the consumer: Customers would be able to conveniently order medications via their computer or mobile device. This will be extremely beneficial for individuals who are already ill and unable to search for a drugstore.

2. METHODOLOGY

This study was done to determine how E-Pharmacy is useful in healthcare industry. The research has been done with a quantitative analysis method to seek out answers to the research questionnaire. Questionnaires were used to gather information. The study's sample size was 117 respondents. The survey was given out to people who use e-commerce platforms for healthcare products. Structured questionnaire was used to collect explanatory data and analyses about E-Pharmacy in Healthcare Sector organizational and concerning time horizon, the study used a cross-sectional study. The sample population was chosen using Convenience sampling technique by using an online platform like- e-mail, Google form, What's App, etc. to know the consumer preferences and buying pattern towards e-pharmacy.

2.1 Objectives of the study

1. To understand the buying pattern of the e-pharmacy customer during COVID-19.
2. To know the current trends of the pharmacy business.
3. To study about E-commerce health care sector.
4. Study the people perception.
5. To study about consumer awareness and preferences of e- Pharmacy.

2.2 Source of Data

In the research we use both primary and secondary data collection methods.

Primary data through questionnaire was collected to obtain first-hand information on the specific research questions.

Secondary data like journals, historical and statistical documents, annual reports, and magazine are used to support the facts acquired through primary data.

3. ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

These questions served as background questions, asked to get some information about the respondent's gender, age, attitude towards purchasing online medicines and experience of shopping online. Below, we will present and examine the results of these questions.

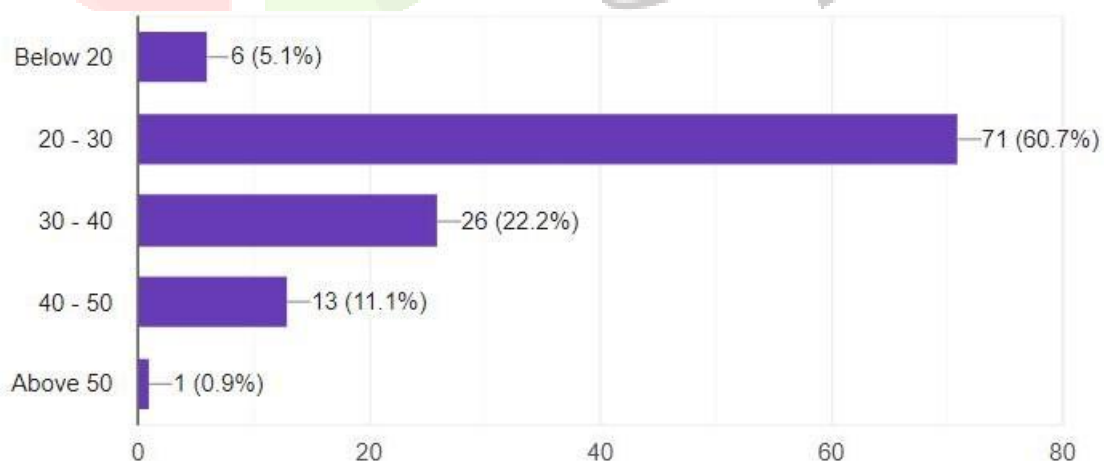
Q. Gender distribution

MALE	68
FEMALE	49

Analysis

There was a majority of male respondents, 58.1% compared to 41.9% female respondents. One reason for the majority of male respondents might be because male respondents were more willing to take a minute to fill out the questionnaire.

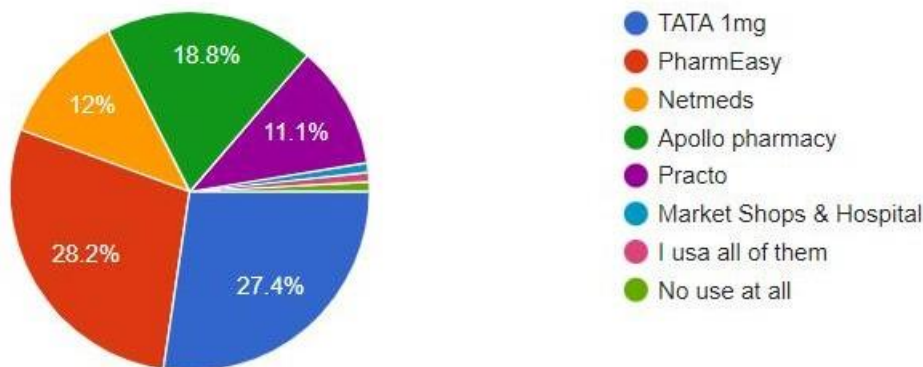
Q Age



Analysis

As it can be seen, the respondents in the age groups below 20 and 20-30, together constitute 65.8% of the total amount of respondents may be because of this age group used end to end devices more and gather more knowledge and they purchase the medicine for their older one. It should also be noted that only 1% of the respondents were in the age 50 and up.

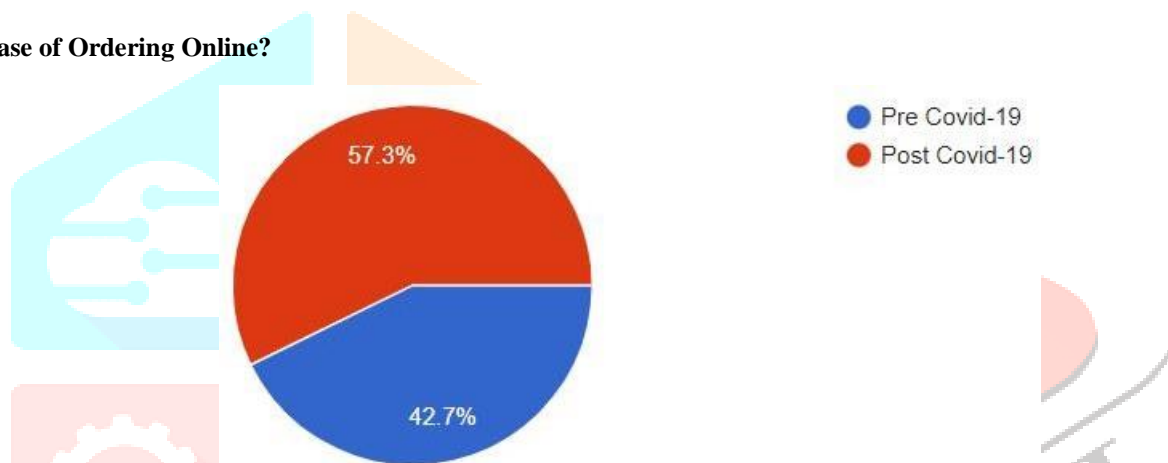
Q. Which E-Pharmacy application preferred most?



Analysis

As it can be seen, 28.2 percent of the respondents were to prefer Pharmacy e-Pharmacy company to buy medicine, 27.4 percent of the respondents were to preferred TATA 1Mg e- Pharmacy company. The goal is to serve as a one-stop shop for all healthcare requirements. Online consultations, medical meetings, collaborations with diagnostic labs, sample collection, online health blogs, prescription refills, and subscriptions are a few examples of these services. These offerings seek to expand alternatives for revenue generating as well as attract in and keep clients.

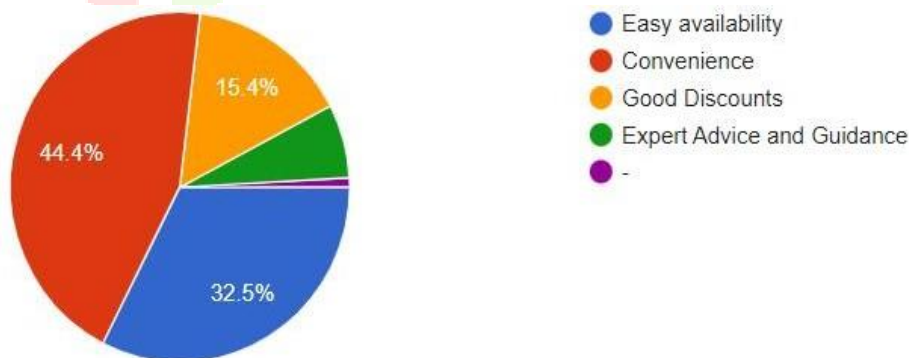
Q. Phase of Ordering Online?



Analysis

As can be seen, the majority of respondent purchase online medicine after covid-19 . As India went under lockdown, realizing the importance of e-pharmacies, concerns that in-person consultations may raise people's chances of contracting the virus, people's preferences have switched toward online consultations. The government's support for telemedicine has greatly increased the need for digital healthcare solutions.

Q. What factors influence your decision to consider purchasing online medicines?



Analysis

clearly reveals that, 44.4 percent of the respondents were preferred to buy medicine through e- pharmacy by means of 'convenience', 32.5 percent of the respondents were preferred to buy medicine through e-pharmacy by means of 'Easy availability', 15.4 percent of the respondents were preferred to buy medicine through e-pharmacy by means of 'Good Discount'. A significant number of promotions and discounts are what primarily drive customer acquisition. Players in the e-pharmacy industry are eager to provide a variety of extra services.

4. RESULT

Most customers are influenced by convenience and discounts for using an online pharmacy to purchase medications. The majority of online pharmacy websites include comprehensive details about the drug, including its side effects, mode of action, maximum dosage, etc. In this study, it was discovered that this thorough information on the drug influences people's decisions to purchase medication from online pharmacies. The development of COVID-19 has fundamentally altered current business patterns and demands. Consumers are more drawn to goods and services that are provided without direct touch between individuals. Most of the merchandise from online pharmacies are shipped using contactless delivery. This study discovered that one of the most important factors affecting consumer decisions to purchase medications from online pharmacies is the contactless delivery of medications. E-pharmacy players are heavily concentrated in metro areas, but they also intend to increase their presence in Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities. A significant number of promotions and discounts are what primarily drive customer acquisition. Players in the e-pharmacy industry are eager to provide a variety of extra services.

5. CONCLUSION

Among the responders, buying prescription drugs via online pharmacies was not a common habit. Customers need to be informed about the advantages and disadvantages of using e-pharmacy platforms to purchase medications. Education efforts should be supported by sufficient medical board of state and central government regulatory authority monitoring of internet pharmacies. Delivery times, the ability to purchase medications without a prescription, and trustworthiness were identified as the top drawbacks of online pharmacies in this survey. The e-pharmacy industry will flourish and revolutionize how people in India acquire medications if the companies concentrate on these market groups. In conclusion, our findings show that most of individuals utilize the Internet to look up pharmaceuticals, preferring to consult doctors before buying. So, if there are certain set guidelines, awareness, and knowledge among the users, the future of online pharmacy can be better.

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